



---

## **PRESS RELEASE**

---

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**March 27, 2002**

For Information Contact Public Affairs  
Mike Johns (602) 514-7566

# **PHOENIX WOMAN PLEADS GUILTY IN THEFT OF VETERANS' BENEFITS**

**PHOENIX, ARIZONA** -- The United States Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona announced today that KIMBERLY HICKS, 37, of Phoenix, Arizona, pled guilty to Making False Statements in connection with the theft of Veterans' Administration benefits in federal district court in Phoenix, Arizona.

HICKS was charged with violating Title 18 of the United States Code, Section 1001, the False Statements statute, and Title 18, Section 641, Theft of Government Property, in connection with her misleading the Veterans' Administration into paying at least \$33, 171 in survivor benefits to a deceased individual. HICKS' grandmother was receiving veterans' benefits at the time of the grandmother's death in March, 1982. Unaware at the time of the grandmother's death, the Veterans' Administration continued to send checks to the decedent, at HICKS' address in Phoenix, and later began directly depositing the payments into a bank account in the decedent's name, over which Hicks had control. In order to verify that beneficiaries are still alive and entitled to benefit payments, the Veterans' Administration periodically sends out written declarations to that effect, requiring the beneficiaries to sign and return them. The Veterans' Administration continued to receive such written declarations of eligibility, signed in the decedent's name, from 1982 through June, 2000. Hicks admitted to completing and signing her grandmother's name on such

(MORE)

a statement to the Veterans' Administration on June 5, 2000, and to appropriating all benefit payments made by the Veteran' Administration since late 1997.

A conviction for Making a False Statement carries a maximum penalty of 5 years, a \$250,000 fine or both.

Sentencing is set before Judge Stephen M. McNamee on May 24, 2002.

The investigation in this case was conducted by the United States Department of Veterans' Affairs, Office of the Inspector General.

The prosecution is being handled by John Joseph Tuchi, Assistant United States Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix, Arizona.

CASE NUMBER: CR-01-347-PHX-SMM  
RELEASE NUMBER: 2002-071

# # #